The

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

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N.B.—All Communications should reach the Editor, Ardeevin, Cadogan Park, Belfast, not later than the 16th of the month preceding publication.

"New Theology for Old."

One can imagine the practical person objecting: "Do we need theology, new or old? Is it not more religion the world requires? Let us have that, then theology may be summarily dismissed." But is it so, in fact? Can any religion, however practical, dispense with theology altogether? That would only be possible if religion were a matter of sentiment or impulse, untutored by mind or uncontrolled by will. But men have never been content to worship an unknown God; worship itself asked for some conception of the deity, before he could be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Just because men were endowed with intellect, in addition to emotion and will, they became theologians, and formed their conceptions of God, of the soul, and of man.

The history of religion makes out no case against theology, except in so far as it is bad theology. The lesson which it clearly teaches is the indissoluble connection between religion and some kind of theology. Question the greatest of religious leaders and teachers and you discover theology, inplicit or avowed. Before they could pretend to teach or lead others they had first to make clear to themselves their reason for the faith which was in them.

Hence, the ban against all theology is impossible. What religion requires is the right kind of theology. It would be impossible to over-state the measure of evil perpetrated by bad heology. The terrible episodes of religious wars, the diabolical iniquities of an Inquisition, the shameful incidents of religious intolerance and bigotry, ancient and modern—all these had their origin, and found their support, in a theology which was as blind and cruel as it was untrue to fact.

Seeing that history thus demonstrates the dangers of bad theology, our duty is plain, viz., to overcome evil with good. Whenever we see misguided attempts to reinstate doctrines repugnant to reason, and long since disowned by the thoughtful and devout of every Christian communion, we are recreant to the truth if we do not declare emphatically "the new thoughts of God, the new hopes of heaven" which have come to us. The more popular the emissaries of evil are who proclaim beliefs in a burning Hell or a personal Devil, the more incumbent it is upon us "to ring out the old and ring in the new." It implies not only an obligation which we owe to Truth itself, but it provides us with the most precious of opportunities for witnessing to the vital connection of enlightened theology with a religion wich is nothing if not practical and Christian.

Notes of the Month.

We have heard with grateful satisfaction that the January number of this Magazine gained us new readers. More than one congregation increased its sale of copies and found people willing to become subscribers at the rate of at least half-a-crown per year. We are confident that when it is realised that every new subscriber will help to lessen an annual deficit hard to wipe out and bring us nearer to making financial ends meet, the number of such subscribers will steadily grow from more to more. Even then, however, a larger income would be essential, seeing that every copy of the Magazine is sold at much less than cost price. After careful consideration we have decided upon a further device for realising that end. It will be noticed that the present number of the Magazine is bulkier than its predecessor, owing to the insertion of four pages of advertisements. We would have preferred to do without this feature had we any hope of effecting our financial object otherwise. As it is, we trust that our readers will not deem themselves ill-used or their magazine disfigured by this addition. Those who retain their copies for binding can easily detach the temporary and retain the permanent things of value.

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We give with each copy of this month's Magazine a leaflet setting forth the constitution and aims of the Laymen's League, to which reference has been made in earlier issues. The leaflet serves as an appeal which has quickly evoked a wide response in Great Britain. We sincerely hope that Ireland will also make early response, so that chapters or branches of the League may be formed here. This new movement has great possibilities of usefulness if we make it a live thing, like its prototype in America. We trust the leaflet will receive sympathetic consideration and that action will follow.

* *

It may be of interest to our readers to know that at the request of the students themselves, and with the cordial approval of their professors, the Rev. H. J. Rossington has consented to preach the Annual Sermon in connection with the Student Christian Movement, in the Assembly Hall, Belfast, on the afternoon of Sunday, February 27th. Such an event is a welcome indication of widening thought and more comprehensive truth. Only a few years ago the basis of the Student Christian Movement would not have permitted of such an invitation to, or of its acceptance by, a minister of our Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church. The change is deserving of grateful recognition.

* *

The many friends of Dr. Mellone in the North of Ireland learned with surprise and interest of his intention to give up the Principalship of the Unitarian Home Missionary College, Manchester, in order to succeed the Rev. W. Copeland Bowie as the Secretary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. We are glad to learn that the change will not take effect till the end of the present College Session, i.e., at the end of June. He will have our very best wishes for his happiness and success in his new position.

* *

The recent sale of two places of worship long associated with two of our congregations has given rise to much discussion, both within and without our community. In the case of one congregation, that of Carrickfergus, no other course seemed possible. For some time the building has been derelict, with no congregation to meet within its walls. Consequently the trustees had to give effect to the policy provided for such a contingency. In the case of Newtownards, the circumstances were otherwise. A congregation remained, small in numbers, and, in its judgment, hardly likely to increase while occupying the old and unsuitable church building. Whether they were justified in availing themselves of an opportunity to dispose of their church is a matter on which only those can decide who have all the facts before them.

* *

The Business Manager (the Rev. G. J. Slipper) is anxious to receive as early as possible any outstanding accounts for the year 1920.

"Is Christianity Practical?"

The Lindsey Press is to be congratulated upon its wisdom and courage in reproducing Dr. Philip H. Wicksteed's "Is Christianity Practical?" First published more than 35 years ago, these addresses deal in a clear and forceful manner with the subject which recent events have again brought to the fore. The lapse of time has not made Dr. Wicksteed's words out of date; on the other hand the application of principles to the problems of life gains rather than loses by being thus necessarily freed from the bias and prejudice so difficult to avoid in dealing with present-day topics.

Christianity failed to prevent the war, and seems equally impotent to solve the many post war problems with which we are now confronted. This fact has caused many to ask anew whether Christianity is practical in the complicated circumstances of our day. This raises the old yet ever new question: What is Christianity? For the purposes of our discussion Christianity must be regarded, as Dr. Wicksteed points out, not as a body of theological doctrines but as a scheme or principle of action. Belief cannot be entirely separated from action, for what we heartily believe must influence our conduct; but the question before us is not Is Christianity true? but, Will it work? and consequently we must think of it as a scheme of life. Christian doctrine may be summed up as belief in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and the infinite and immortal worth of every human soul. This of course is not exhaustive, but will serve our purpose. The scheme of life involved in this doctrine is to live as sons of God, to treat all men as brothers, and to think of and deal with others as having souls of infinite and immortal worth. Is this practical? Will it work in all the relationships of life, in the home and in business, in politics and international affairs?

The seriousness and vital importance of this question is thoroughly realised by Dr. Wicksteed. As he says, "It would not be enough that it should be a beautiful ideal of life—if unpractical, it would be mischievous, however beautiful; and, of course, no such idea as deliberately supporting institutions for the express purpose of cultivating sentiments of sympathy towards an unworkable principle of life would have any right so much as to enter our minds." We cannot cling to Christianity as a sort of spiritual luxury, something pleasing to contemplate on Sundays; it is either a workable scheme of life or it is a hindrance to human progress. We must be either wholeheartedly for it or against it. There is no middle course for reasonable beings.

When we ask of any system, Is it practical? we are too often inclined to mean, Will it be profitable to me personally? It is necessary to distinguish between what is essentially practical and what is practical to the individual under given circumstances. The application of the Christian principle of life might mean ruin for some, as it meant the crucifixion for Christ, but if it tended to make life as a whole more fruitful of good and more harmonious it would be practical. The fact that it would involve some martyrdoms should not deter us; the element of danger and risk never yet harmed any good cause.

Then there is the further consideration; in considering the application of Christianity to the various departments of life we must be clear in our minds what the proper functions of these departments really are. For example, what are the social functions of business and politics. Too often we regard business from the purely personal point of view and accept it as the means of accumulating possessions for ourselves. But business exists primarily for the purpose of the production and distribution of commodities for the use of the community, and the question at issue is not whether the application of the Christian principle of life will bring wealth to the individual, but whether it will tend to produce and distribute more efficiently; and efficiency in this connection must not be judged solely from the point of view of the commodities but also from the point of view of those engaged in their production and distribution. Dividends

and profits may possibly be smaller, but the social functions of business would certainly be the better fulfilled, as the experience of several well-known firms proves, were we all to act in business as sons of God and to treat others as brothers and as having souls of infinite and immortal worth. Then as to politics, we are too much inclined to confuse the party system with the proper social functions. Politics exists not for the purpose of winning elections and giving power to a particular party, but for the good government of the community and the wise regulation of the intercourse between nations. The application of Christian principles to politics does not mean that organised Christianity, the Churches, should take political sides and dictate political policies, but that a larger and more generous spirit than partisanship should be infused into all politicians. There are two tendencies in human nature, both of which are good, the conserving and the liberating. We may be either conservative or liberal, or any one of the numerous varieties of each, and the application of Christian principles would not necessarily involve a change of sides, but it would involve a larger than personal or class outlook, it would mean that we should work for the conserving or liberating, not as we thought it would benefit ourselves, but as we thought it would help to make a better world; in short, we should have regard only for the social function of politics.

Having answered his question in the affirmative, Dr. Wicksteed adds a chapter on "Elimination or Redemption?" There are those who, while admitting that Christianity is practical in a sort of way, doubt whether it is completely practical. They seriously question whether there is enough for all and room for all; they speak of the "survival of the fittest," and maintain that as this is the law of nature so it must be the law of human nature. Few if any have the courage to be absolutely consistent in the application of this creed, the claims of pity cannot be utterly ignored without impoverishing our humanity, and the conclusion to which our author brings us is, "There is room for all. It is not the will of our Father that one of the little ones should perish. Whenever we have tried the Christian principle of life, it has shown itself to be practical above all others. Every noble instinct and every deep experience of our hearts confirms it. The objections urged against it break down at every point. Can we not trust it? Can we not make our choice at last, and casting away the ghastly doctrines of elimination, proclaim Christainity practical, write 'redemption' upon the banner under which we march, and, with loyal and trusting hearts, go forth to seek and to save?"

We confidently commend this little book to our readers. Its presentation of Christianity, not as a sickly sentimentality, nor as an intellectual subtilty, but as an eminently practical way of life will be found timely and helpful.

G. L. P.

Obituary Notice.

MRS. SEMPLE, OF ANTRIM.

Our little congregation at Antrim has suffered a serious loss in the death of Mrs. Semple on Sunday night, December 26th. The Funeral took place on the following Tuesday. Revs. G. V. Crook, of Antrim, and Alfred Turner, of Templepatrick, officiated at the services held in her brother's (Mr. Watt's) house, and at the Old Burial Ground, Templepatrick.

Mrs. Semple was deeply religious, quiet and thoughtful, always the unfailing friend to our ministers, one of those unobtrusive souls, whose worth is only adequately realized when "God's finger touches her and she sleeps."

Her financial interest and support to Antrim Congregation was deep and practical, and when some time ago she moved to Belfast, she not only continued her stipend to Antrim but always journeyed to Antrim for our half-yearly Communion Service.

Sometimes "We never prize the music till the sweet-voiced bird has flown."

The History of Non-Subscribing Presbyterianism.

[An Address delivered by Dr. John Campbell in the York Street Lecture Hall, on Nov. 16th.]

II.—Early Days.

I have dwelt on these elementary principles because without a knowledge of them it is impossible to appreciate the motives of the men who founded the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church and kindred religious bodies. The Protestant Reformation in Scotland was dominated by the personality of John Knox. Knox was influenced both by Calvin and Luther. In his time Calvinism had hardly crystallised into its final uncompromising form. The Lutheran feeling still held sway As a result the old Scottish Confession of Faith, drawn up in 1550 by Knox and some of his associates, breathed a spirit very different from that which emanates from Calvinism as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which supplanted it nearly 100 years later, in 1647. Knox's Scottish Confession would not in many respects meet with our approval to-day, but the spirit in which it was drawn up was admirable. It says: "We ought not sa meikle to luke what men before us have said or done, as unto that quhilk the Haly Ghaist speaks within the body of the Scriptures, and unto that quhilk Christ Jesus Himselfe did and commanded to be done." In other words, we are to concentrate our attention not on Creeds or other opinions of men who have lived before us, but upon the spirit of the teaching which runs through the whole Bible, and especially on the teaching and example of Jesus. Three hundred and sixty years have passed since this was written, and it still represents in a few words the ideal after which the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church strives. What a pity that the political necessities of Scotland and the dictates of fashion in Ireland ever put on one side such a fine expression of religious principle. I have dwelt on this because our early Scottish Presbyterian ancestors were reared under the guidance of this old confession, which, moreover, was never made a compulsory creed to which adhesion could be legally enforced. They came to Ireland bringing with them the ancient Presbyterianism of Scotland. They left Scotland around the epoch between 1610 and 1645, before the Westminster Confession was compiled. Our older congregations were founded by them. The spirit in which they were founded still survives. It led them to reject the Westminster Confession.

In 1647 the Westminster Confession of Faith—a cut-and-dried statement of rigid Calvinism—was accepted by the Church of Scotland as a political necessity of the bargaining between the Governments of England and Scotland. That the bargain was subsequently broken by the English does not concern us now. What we are interested in is the fact that the old Scottish Confession of Knox was supplanted by a confession which was made the legal religion of Scotland. Nevertheless, the old confession remained authoritative in the hearts of the people for at least 100 years longer. Our first congregations in Ireland took root under the influence of the old Confession solely. Later congregations were formed between 1645 and 1690. To all of these came later immigrants from Scotland, who left that country after the introduction of the Westminster Confession, but before the authority of Knox's old confession had died down. As a natural result these early days between 1610 and 1690 were passed without dissension among the Irish Presbyterians. Indeed, they had enough to do to protect themselves against the bishops of the Church of Ireland without quarrelling among themselves. When William III had won the battle of the Boyne and settled Ireland a fresh immigration of Scots took place. Amongst these were ministers and others who had grown up in Scotland under the Westminster Confession. They would appear to have thought that the kind of Presbyterianism which political necessity had made fashionable in Scotland should be made fashionable in Ireland also. At any rate they started a movement which

ended in 1698 in licentiates being required to sign or, as it was then called, subscribe the Westminster Confession. This was followed in 1705 by a decree that all ministers should sign the Confession before ordination. Up to this time all ministers of the Synod of Ulster, as the governing body of the Irish Presbyterians was then called, had been Non-Subscribers—that is, they had not been required to sign the Westminster Confession of Faith. Not only so, but they had strenuously resisted all attempts to make them sign the Articles of the Church of Ireland. That the ministers already ordained were unwilling to sign the Confession, and were heartily non-subscribers, is evident from the fact that only those who were about to be ordained and were defenceless were to be required to sign. The immediate cause of this endeavour to enforce the subscription of the Confession was the persecution of Thomas Emlyn. Emlyn and Boyse were joint ministers of a congregational church in Dublin founded by English Presbyterians of the Cromwellian times, Scottish Presbyterians, and French Huguenots. Boyse learned privately that Emlyn held Arian views and communicated this fact to the other congregational ministers. Such Arian views were illegal, only the theology of the Church of Ireland being legally capable of being held, or at least expressed. Emlyn's fellow ministers were afraid that if it got abroad that one of them was an Arian the bishops might take the opportunity to attack them and to put the law into operation against them. To save their own skins against this possible event they united in handing over to the bishops the unfortunate and too-trustful Emlyn. He was tried, imprisoned and heavily fined and practically ruined. The fate of Emlyn made the Presbyterian ministers in the North afraid that their denomination would get into trouble with the bishops, as it was well known that many of the ministers held Arian views. As a result, two years after the Emlyn affair, which happened in 1703, the Synod of Ulster decided to make a public show of orthodoxy by compelling all new ministers to sign before ordination. The ministers already placed were left non-subscribers.

In this same year, 1705, there was founded in Belfast the "Belfast Society," a debating society for ministers, of which Rev. John Abernethy, of Antrim, was one of the most important members. From his arguments against creeds he is known as the " Father of Non-Subscription " in Ireland. The " Belfast Society " became a centre of the " New Lights " as the Non-Subscribers were then called. A number of outside considerations about this time helped to influence the Irish Presbyterians towards Subscription. Amongst these was the Test Act of 1704, aimed against the Catholics and Presbyterians, and compelling anyone who held a public office or took pay from the Crown to take the Sacrament in the Established Church of Ireland. Presbyterians could not therefore be magistrates, burgesses, customs officials, officers in the navy or army, or officials in courts of law. Attempts were also made to deprive Presbyterian ministers of the power to celebrate marriages, or to carry on schools. In 1714, under the Schism Act, the Presbyterian Meeting Houses in Antrim, Downpatrick, and Rathfriland were nailed up. Although these disabilities were removed by the Toleration Act of 1719, they so impressed many of the ministers of the Synod of Ulster with the fear of the bishops that any leaning they had towards the adoption of an orthodox creed was strengthened. From 1720 to 1726 the Synod was the scene of an annual wrangle between the Subscribers, who wished the Confession to be adopted and the Non-Subscribers who desired to go on in the old way. In 1726 the Subscribers were in the majority, and seventeen ministers and their congregations who were determined Non-Subscribers, were thenceforward excluded from the General Synod and placed in a Non-Subscribing Presbytery, the Presbytery of Antrim, by themselves. The early minutes of the Presbytery of Antrim, the mother of our Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, are not available, so that I cannot record the names of those who formed it.

(*To be continued*).

Young People's Page.

GET YOUR COMPASS RIGHT!

There is a time in every boy's life when his heart is set upon owning a real mariner's compass. Having achieved his heart's desire how often he holds the little wonder in his hand and watches the tiny quivering needle turn to the north! He takes it with him on his walks and learns to track his way by its aid. Perhaps he has stood on the upper deck of some ship and noted how, in sure reliance upon the compass before him, the steersman guides the vessel on its course. How much both man and boy depend upon the rightness of the magnetic needle inside the compass.

And yet that needle is not always a sure guide. Sometimes, through one cause or another, the needle may be turned from its true task of pointing to the north. A cargo of iron or steel placed too near the compass will cause the needle to be upset. At other times atmospheric conditions may exercise a bad influence. Thus, from these or other reasons, the needle points away from the north, and to rely upon it then would mean a serious risk for sailor and ship.

Because of this it is the practice in the navy to examine every compass from time to time and test its power. This is frequently done at the beginning of a voyage. Then, if the needle shows any deviation from its true direction, the defect is made good, and the vessel starts upon its new voyage with its compass in true relation to the magnetic north. Without such correspondence uncertainty would mark the course of the vessel, and disaster almost invariably characterise its close. Thus, the correctness of the compass is of the utmost importance to all mariners who set out to reach their desired haven across the stormy seas.

Does not that tell us a lesson we all need to learn? Perhaps we began life's voyage with the compass of our lives perfectly right. It pointed straight and true, and we had full confidence in steering our course of conduct as it suggested. But what of its condition after some months' thoughts and deeds? Perhaps, quite unknowingly, we have caused it to turn away from the north, and it has made us guilty of mistakes in our reckoning. Should we not, therefore, at the beginning of another journey, have it carefully examined, and, if out of order, made right? How hopefully we all look forward to a new voyage, and how anxious we all are to reach the desired haven!

Let us, then, see that our compass is right, and that no merely selfish aim has caused it to turn aside from its divinely-set direction. So much will depend upon this rightness, both for us and for others. "To have a conscience void of offence towards God and man" was the life purpose of St. Paul. Does not that mean that he tried to keep his compass right, for each one's conscience is the compass which God gave to guide aright through life and its dangers. Let it be right, and our reliance on it may be sure, for God will see to it that the good conscience receives its right direction and reaches its safe goal. Here the truth is seen; not only in relation to St. Paul, but also in relation to every man who truly lives:—

> The needle pointed to the pole
> Yet trembled as it pointed, still
> Conscious alike of good and ill';
> In his infinity
> Looking, O Lord, to Thee.

Obituary Notice.

MISS ELEANOR ISABEL (NELLIE) KINNON passed away at the residence of her parents, the National Schools, Stanhope Street, on the 10th ult. For several months she had been in failing health, though it was not until shortly before Christmas that she took to her bed. She possessed a beautiful, quiet, unselfish and exemplary disposition, and it was, therefore, with very keen and sincere regret that we parted with her. In the great sorrow that her parents and brothers have been called upon to bear in the loss of their only daughter and sister, we would extend to them our very real sympathy and our thanks to our Heavenly Father for the young and beautiful life He has called to the greater and fuller life. The funeral service in the house and at the graveside at Carnmoney was conducted by the Missionary.

Education in Belfast.

By Miss Dora Mellone.

In studying the present position of elementary education in Belfast, it must be remembered the system is based on the Education Act of 1892. Now anyone, magistrate, teacher, parent, or child, may ride roughshod over this Act. If the child has attended 75 days in the half-year, he will escape prosecution. Even when the attendance has fallen below this pitiful minimum, and a summons is issued, the fine for the first offence is nominal, and often as low as five shillings even for a third or fourth summons. Also there must be an interval of two months between each summons. The child can, of course, easily earn the amount of the fine by street trading or message running. The number of School Inspectors is insufficient: the last printed report gives it as twelve, each having charge of over 5,000 children. It takes about three weeks to get round each district. In England the average at the same period was 2,500 children for each Inspector, and consequently it is possible to keep in touch with cases needing supervision. An attendance of 90 per cent. of the number on rolls is quite general. In Belfast the average in 1918 was 80 per cent. This figure is reckoned from the number on the rolls, but that number includes over 2,000 half-timers, and there are over a thousand children not on the rolls at all.

School accommodation is woefully deficient. In 1918, only 57,500 children could have been crowded into the schools, and there were 67,610 on the rolls. In other words, of every six children in Belfast, one cannot be crowded into school. These figures of course do not represent a solid block of over ten thousand children who never go to school. Bessy is in her place this week, and then, developing scarlet fever, is absent on Monday, and Peggy gets her place in the overcrowded room to lose it next fortnight with sore throat, when someone else seizes her chance, and so on. In this way children get an intermittent education, the average of total absentees being low, but the number of casual attenders being very high. Anybody who has ever done class teaching will know what this means, both for teacher and child.

Of those who get into the schools, half the infants are lost between the infant and the first class. Of the children under Standard V., one of every seven disappears. The leakage from Edinburgh is practically nil. Exemptions from further school attendance are given if children can reach the Standard V. level in reading, writing, and arithmetic. These are also given for "agricultural or domestic necessity," generously interpreted by a wide-minded magistracy, who do not believe in oppressing the deserving poor by depriving them of the child's earnings. As one result, in Belfast 5,700 persons engaged in "gainful occupations" are illiterate, and there are 1,500 illiterates between the ages of 9 and 14. In the entrance examination at the Technical Institution, one-third of the boys working in skilled trades fail, and their education is often so deficient they cannot take the special classes in their trades. For the Higher Grade Certificate, one in five who enter fails.

What a dreadful waste it is! Here is Tommy, who has been through the first three standards, attending for about two-thirds of the school year, acquiring an extremely imperfect acquaintance with his mother tongue. This he soon loses, as street selling of the latest Stop Press does not make heavy demands on his knowledge. At the age of fifteen, he can neither read nor write, and is therefore only fit for the most poorly paid forms of casual labour. He will eventually drift into the vast army of unemployables. Would it not be truer economy to spend more money, have additional school inspectors, and above all, more school buildings?

Then for the wider issues of educational reform. A Bill was introduced in the present Parliament which remedied the most serious defects of the 1892 Act. It has been hung up. But the time will soon be upon us when six of the Ulster counties will have direct powers of legislation. Surely one of the earliest measures to be introduced into

the new Northern Parliament should be an Education Bill. Every effort should be made to prevent such a measure becoming a battle-ground for the great religious denominations, and especially to avoid, if possible, any intensification of the bitterness between Protestants and Roman Catholics. This would be a calamity. But the interests of the child must be paramount. Under the present Act almost everything else is considered, the safety of the potato crop, of the hay harvest, sickness in the home. The result is writ large in the history of Ireland and in the history of Belfast. Much has been said of the need "to make the world safe for democracy." What of the need to make democracy safe for the world, including itself? We may see from the happenings in Belfast during this year how very unsafe is the democracy, only five-sixths of whom have had any smattering of education. It is not safe to rear up a generation of untrained uneducated young men and women, ready to fall a prey to any agitator, or be carried away by any outburst of mob violence. True, to do otherwise will involve another burdet for the ratepayer. The Governmenn Bill proposed an education rate, and this is necessary, if real progress is to be made. Rates in Belfast in future will be heavy, but the new impost should be met.

We Unitarians can help to form a public opinion on this matter. Our traditons mark us out as the natural champions of educational reform and religious toleration. It is a thorny and a difficult question, but it must be grappled with, if we are to expect, or deserve, any measure of peace or prosperity in the future.

Social Service Notes.

It is generally admitted that local elementary education is in a most unsatisfactory state, and many folk are hoping that when Ulster gets her own Parliament she will make a resolute effort to introduce many necessary reforms into our educational system. Accordingly, the Committee of the Union for Social Service are prompted to do all that is possible to have the problems of the educational system ventilated amongst the members of our churches. I am instructed to ask all ministers to observe Sunday, 13th February (or some Sunday near that date), as Social Service Sunday, and, if possible, to devote their sermons on that day to the subject of education. And surely there is no greater Christian duty than to see that our little ones are trained in the right way to fit them for a noble and useful life. Also, I will call your attention to the important lecture which Professor J. A. Lindsay, M.D., etc., has kindly undertaken to deliver in the Central Hall, Belfast, on Wednesday, 16th February, at 7-30. His subject will be the problems of elementary education, and he intends to suggest possible reforms which an Ulster Parliament could and should introduce. Professor Lindsay is, perhaps, our greatest authority on local educational problems, and what he has to say will be of the greatest value. In this connection I would ask you to read the following brief article on "Education in Belfast," by Miss Dora Mellone, who has devoted much time and thought to the matter.

ERNEST H. PICKERING,
Hon. Sec. Union for Social Service.

Obituary Notice.

BELFAST DOMESTIC MISSION.

MR. THOMAS J. GEDDIS passed away at his residence, 14 Earl Street, on the 6th ult., after a long and tedious illness, borne with wonderful patience and fortitude. His love of home and those near and dear to him was very marked, while his interest in the Mission and its various activities remained devoted to the end. His brightness of disposition, constant thoughtfulness for others and forgetfulness of self, his ready wit and appreciation of real wholesome fun, remain in the memory of those whose privilege it was to revel in his friendship. The deepest sympathy will be felt for his sorrowing widow and daughter. The funeral service in the house and at the grave in the Old Shankill Burying Ground was conducted by the Missionary.

Lesson Notes.

[In accordance with the Scheme for 1921, prepared by the Sunday School Committee of the N.S.P.C.I.]

February 6th. Jesus is Tempted. Read Matthew iv. 1-11. Key text, Matthew iv. 4.

1. *Why Jesus was tempted.* Jesus was tempted because only thus could he be an example unto us. Even though he was full of Holy Spirit, yet he had to be put to the test. Temptation is a sort of examination. Our knowledge would be of little value unless it helped us pass examinations. So we can only show our goodness by passing through temptation. Jesus had to show himself worthy of his great mission by being able to feel temptation and overcome it. Insist on the reality of the temptations. Jesus *really* felt them, and had to fight hard to overcome them. N.B.—The forty days' fasting. This seems to express the fact that he who has his body most under control is best able to face great temptations. It is a good thing to learn to do without things we like, because then we are better able to do without when the great temptations come.

2. *The first temptation.* Jesus was hungry, and, therefore, the spirit of evil entering his heart suggested he should use his great powers to make bread out of stones. But Jesus knew that his powers were for a higher purpose than merely feeding himself. "Man does not live by bread alone." So our first care should not be to snatch all the food we can, but to show ourselves helpful and loving. For *elder scholars* lay stress on the fact that the world, like a spirit of evil, tempts them to think of nothing but getting on—that is: acquiring food, property, clothes, etc. These things are all necessary; but they must never be obtained at the cost of forgetting the things of God. Honour, generosity, and truth, and such like virtues are the chief concern.

3. *The second temptation.* The evil spirit tempted Jesus to show off. This is a temptation that comes to all, especially to great and clever people. Boys and girls are always inclined to show how clever, how brave, how strong they are in order to make folk say, "Really what a wonderful boy!" "What a smart girl!" But those who do this, especially those who are foolhardy, are tempting God. God has given us our ability to *use*, not to *abuse*, and therefore Jesus refused to abuse his great ability. He came to save others—not to show how cleverly he could save himself. For *elder scholars* note verse 6, whence arises the saying, "The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose."

4. *The third temptation.* Time after time it becomes clear that if Jesus had wished it he had the ability and power to become a great earthly king. The third temptation is a symbol of that fact. *If only* Jesus would seek evil and selfish ends he could be the king of the world. But Jesus did not come to be the king of the world. He came to lead men beyond the world to the kingdom of God. He did not want men to serve him, but wished them to follow him in the service of God. "Him only shalt thou serve." Each of us in his own way is tempted to be selfish and base in order to gain wealth, power and place, even though the wealth be no more than an extra bun and the place be no more than a comfortable seat. In every case, however, we must remember not to serve what is evil, but to serve God.

5. *"Angels ministered unto him."* When we fight against temptations we have more helpers than we know. God and his angels are fighting for us.

February 13. Jesus proclaims the Gospel and calls the Disciples. Read Mark i. 14-20. Key text, Mark i. 17.

1. *Jesus' Gospel.* "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." This is the reward for repentance. So that Jesus is quite justified in calling his message a gospel, which means "good tidings." He came to comfort and console us. Especially did he come to the sinners, above all, to those who felt themselves sinners, and therefore were ready to do good when the word of comfort and cheer was spoken to them. Everything goes to show that what Jesus meant by the kingdom of heaven was *goodness* or *love*. For instance, take the story of the man who asked his minister

where heaven was. The minister took him to a small cottage, where a poor, bedridden old woman lived alone, and, pointing through the window, showed him a hard-working man who gave up his one holiday in the week to come to the cottage and tidy up for the old woman and look after her. "There is heaven," said the minister. Where Love is, God is, and where God is, Heaven is. For *elder scholars*, take Jesus' saying that "the kingdom of heaven cometh not by observation: the kingdom of heaven is within you."

2. *Calling the disciples.* (1) Jesus chose all sorts of men to be his disciples. The first he called were humble fishermen, and, quaintly enough, he told them to come and he would make them fishers of men. No doubt had he called a weaver he would have told him to be a weaver of beautiful thoughts and deeds; or a shipbuilder to be a builder of souls able to float upon the sea of temptation. (2) Note how readily they followed him. This shows that they were repentant, and seeking someone to comfort and help them. Do not hesitate whenever Jesus says. "Follow me." We may not hear him, as the disciples heard him, but every time we feel called upon to do something generous or brave that is Jesus calling, and we should immediately follow. For *elder scholars.* Jesus called his disciples to service, because only by *doing* good can we be good.

February 20th. Review. It is hoped that all teachers will take advantage of the Sundays without fixed lessons, either to review what they have previously taught, or else to make up for a lesson that has somehow been missed.

February 27th. A Wonderful Sabbath Day. Read Mark i. 21-39. Key text, Mark i. 22.

1. *Jesus in the Synagogue.* It was by no means unusual for the officials of the Synagogue, after the opening religious exercises were over, to call on some visiting teacher who happened to be present, to expound the law. In this way Jesus, and especially St. Paul, did a great deal of their teaching. But Jesus astonished them, not indeed so much by what he said, but by the way he said it—*with authority.* The reason was, that Jesus felt the Fatherhood of God so intimately that he could speak of God's will as something he really knew, understood, and practised.

2. *The demoniac.* It was the evil spirits, feeling that their power was threatened, who first recognised the divine power of Jesus. In most cases, those who were said to be possessed by demons were lunatics and epileptics, and over these cases a truly powerful personality like Jesus would wield healing influence. For *elder scholars.*—It is very difficult to state with any exactitude what is meant by the phrase "possessed with devils." It would seem as if all cases which could not be regarded as simple sickness, *e.g.*, epilepsy, paralysis, nervous and mental diseases, were regarded as the work of evil spirits who dwelt within the sufferer. It is precisely these cases which need more than any what we may roughly term "mind cure." Not that this *explains* all Jesus' healing work, but it does suggest a way of understanding it.

3. *At Eventide.* Teachers should do their best to make vivid this beautiful scene of ailing and distressed sufferers crowding round the Good Physician. It shows Jesus in a most gracious light. His own comfort and rest mattered not compared with the sufferings of humanity. For *elder scholars,* compare Mark i. 34 with Matt. iv. 23, 24. Mark says he healed *many,* but Matthew says he healed *all.* Mark does not claim an absolute supernatural power for our Lord.

4. *The early morning.* Jesus went out alone to pray. He had need to take in of the Holy Spirit in order to give it out. Herein is a lesson for us all. If we would do good, we need to keep our hearts constantly open in prayer to the goodness of God. If we would be helpful, we must have the means to help. To be able to teach we must be able to learn. For *elder scholars*—verses 38 and 39 are important. They show that Jesus did not work wonders in order to show off his power. He came to teach men. He only healed them because they *needed* it. But do we not love him the more because he gave way to the cries of suffering, and sometimes put aside his teaching in order to help and heal.

Reports.

[These will be heartily welcomed. Promptness in despatch and brevity in form are essential.]

Belfast Domestic Mission.—On Saturday, December 18th, 1920, the Congregational Christmas Party took place, when about 120 scholars and adults sat down to tea. The schoolroom was suitably decorated with evergreens, flags and lanterns, while in the centre of the room stood a tall, toy-laden Christmas Tree. After tea, games were arranged for the young folk, and several Carols were rendered by the Mission Choir. Two highly-appreciative items in our programme were the Comedies, provided by the kindness of Mrs. J. Glynne Davies and the "Unity Players" of our Comber Congregation. Our people entered into the spirit of the plays to the great delight and appreciation of the players. Towards the end of the evening, Father Christmas (kindly impersonated by Mr. E. R. Jackson, of Mountpottinger) came and distributed toys to the scholars. Votes of thanks to Mrs. Glynne Davies and the Comber friends, and Mr. and Mrs. E. R. Jackson, were proposed and seconded and carried with loud applause by all present. The catering was very admirably and economically carried out by our Committee of Young People.

On Tuesday, December 21st, a Carol Service was held, conducted by Mr. C. J. M'Kisack, the Missionary officiating at the organ. Several Carols, Solos and a Duet were rendered by Choir members, in addition to Selections from Handel's "Messiah" on the organ. A collection was taken in aid of the Christmas Party expenses.

The Young People, out of their Flower Fund, which had accumulated n the past few months, purchased and presented to the Committee a brass Altar Vase. This was very gracefully received by Miss J. E. Bruce, after the evening service on Sunday, December 12th, a very beautiful bouquet of flowers being placed in the vase by her.

Our attendances keep up wonderfully well, and we hope for a further increase now that we are re-opening our 7 o'clock services and Sunday School at 3 p.m., both being discontinued on account of local disturbances.

The annual distribution of coals, groceries, and clothing took place at Christmas, a number of very needy families receiving substantial help.

Belfast :—First Church.—The new electric light installation is now in use, and the result is a great improvement. This Church was the first in Belfast to adopt electricity as an illuminant, and now after many years it is fitting that it should accept the "New Light" of modern improvement and progress. In keeping therewith, the minister Rev. H. J. Rossington dealt on several evenings in January with crude and belated theological attempts made by a visiting Evangelist to Belfast to re-instate belief in hell as a burning fire, and as the ultimate abode of God's children. Many orthodox persons were present. It is proposed, on the Sunday evenings in February, to consider "Religion's Message for Modern Minds" and combat the mischievous design to rehabilitate ancient and unworthy doctrines more appropriate for the Dark Ages than for days of enlightenment.

Ballycarry.—The Annual Soiree in connection with the Sunday School was held as usual on the last day of the Old Year. The children of the Sunday School met at one o'clock, tea being served upon assembling. The afternoon was passed in games and dancing, the teachers doing their utmost to entertain the children. Before leaving, each guest received a bag of good things. The minister opened the proceedings with a short address, the teachers present being the Misses M'Meekin, Service and Hamilton, who were ably assisted by Mr. James Majowen. In the evening the Soiree for elder members was held, and dancing welcomed the New Year. The tea makers were the Misses Hamilton, Millar, Robinson, N. Robinson, Connor, and others. The Soiree was much enjoyed by all who were present, and the attendance was very good indeed.

Banbridge.—The Annual Children's Party was held on New Year's Eve. It was a very happy and large gathering. After tea the Prizes were kindly

presented to the successful scholars by Miss M'Caw. In a happy speech, she congratulated the scholars who had well attended the Sunday School throughout the year, and hoped the minister's prophecy, "that there will be a still larger number of successful scholars coming forward for prizes next year" would be fulfilled. The Sunday School was increasing in numbers, an Infant Class had just been started, and the Senior Bible Class had close on 20 members. Numerous games were then indulged in and some of the seniors arranged a series of Tableaux Vivants which were loudly applauded. Father Christmas put in an appearance during the course of the evening and everybody present received a gift from his well-stocked bag. The hours slipped by all too quickly, and very reluctantly did the younger ones decide it was time to go home,....then, when the congestion in the room was somewhat relieved, the Terpsichorean Art was indulged in until the Old Year was fast dying. Many of them attended the Watch-Night Service at Scarva Street Presbyterian Church.

Our Dramatic Society accepted the invitation to produce their play before the inmates of the local Infirmary at their Annual Treat on January 7th, which was greatly appreciated by one and all. Our choir also distinguished itself on the same occasion, many members (including our ever-available and beloved organist) rendering Solos and Duets.

On Sunday, 16th January, a beautiful Memorial Tablet to the late Capt. W. Haughton Smyth, who fell at Thiepval on the 1st July, 1916, was unveiled. In the absence of the deceased's aunt (Miss Smyth, of Milltown, who had been devoted to him from earliest boyhood), the unveiling was performed by the Rev. P. Godding. The special preacher was the Rev. J. Glynne Davies, who in a most appropriate address, eloquently paid tribute to the sterling worth of the hero, whose loss was very deeply felt by the Church and numerous friends. Miss Dornan very beautifully played the Dead March (Saul), all reverently standing. Mr. Davies' text was chosen from Habakkuk ii. 11, "The stone shall cry out from the wall." Mr. Adamson and Miss Helen Stevenson rendered the Solos "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and "He wipes the tear from every eye," respectively, with deep feeling. The Choir also rendered the Anthem "The Lord is my Shepherd." Miss M'Cammon and Mr. Marney, with the first-named Soloist, very efficiently augmented our Choir, which did great credit to its skilled organist. Mr. Davies gave a second and helpful address before a good congregation at Evening service.

Cairncastle.—On Sunday, 12th December, the Moderator of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Rev. G. L. Phelps, of Holywood, visited the Old Meeting House. There was a good congregation. An offertory was taken up on behalf of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.

On Friday evening, 17th December, the Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D. lectured on "The Pilgrim Fathers" in the Cairncastle Lecture Hall. The lantern (lent by Mr. Sam Bailie) for the illustrations was operated by Mr. Holden Canning, from Larne. There was an attentive and interested audience, though not a large one; not so large, as, to the credit of the neighbourhood, that which would have assembled for such an intellectual treat, but that the arrangement of the event had been unavoidably hurried and the notice of it unfortunately short, and, still more, that two important local dances had been arranged on the same evening, and a third in the town of Larne.

Comber.—YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETY—On Wednesday evening, the 12th January, the Society, under the guidance of Miss Eileen Andrews, held a specially enjoyable evening. Miss Andrews read, with clear enunciation and dramatic talent, a series of stories ranging from a Fairy Story to those of Bartimeus. In conculsion, she told a few funny stories or "Chestnuts" as she called them, and invited members of the audience to relate any story or anecdote they knew and she would present a prize of a cake to the teller of the best story, the audience to judge by ballot which was the best story. Miss Eva Andrews won the cake. The

audience entered into the spirit of the game, and an unusually interesting and novel evening was spent.

Crumlin.—The Annual Christmas Tree Party for the children of the congregation was held on Saturday, 18th December. The arrangements were carried out by Mrs. Bowen. assisted by Miss Manderson and Miss Hunter. A well-decorated Christmas Tree proved as usual an attractive feature, and holly and flags, lanterns and bunting gave the room a festive appearance. Gifts were provided for forty children, but tender years prevented some from being present, and colds others; however, about half that number, with several adults, made up a jolly little party, and with shouts and laughter, refreshments and games, the happy moments were all too quickly whiled away. Subscriptions from the gentlemen members of the congregation, and cakes and sweets and other things from the ladies, made this party possible.

Glenarm : Sunday School.—The annual distribution of prizes took place on Sunday, 26th December. Books were given to the scholars who had attended regularly throughout the year. Two pupils, Mary M'Henry Robinson and Eveline Robinson, never missed a Sunday, thereby establishing a record which we hope to see repeated on future occasions. Prizes for the best answering in Christian Catechism were awarded to Mary M'Henry Robinson, and Annie Lowry Robinson. The children invariably attend Divine Service, join in the singing, and take their fair share in the work of the Church. We would earnestly appeal to every member of the congregation to imitate their example in this respect.

Greyabbey.—It is a pleasure to report the success which attended the Small Sale, Concert and Dance, held on 27th December, which was promoted by Mr. Samuel Patton. The promoter is generously giving the proceeds to procure much-needed modern lamps for the Church. Mr Patton has always taken a keen interest in his Church, but does not confine his attentions to the one of which he is a member; our Churches generally are helped by his benefactions. Great assistance was given by the Rev. J. G. Davies and his wife, who kindly brought the Comber Unity Players. They gave a couple of sketches, which were greatly appreciated, and richly deserved the applause they provoked. The Comber Party also contributed songs, which, together with our local talent, made a very acceptable programme. Dancing followed to the enlivening music supplied by Mr. and Miss Murphy, " and all went merry as a marriage bell." Our thanks are not only due to Mr. Patton for organising the entire evening, but to all those members and friends who assisted in so very many ways to made the effort a success.

Holywood.—The Annual Sunday School Soiree was held on Thursday, January 13th. About 60 children sat down to tea, and afterwards when the entertainment began the school-room was well filled. An extensive, varied and enjoyable programme was carried out, in which the following items occurred:- Dutch Girls' Song, Shoon Song by Miss Rhona Harvey, Dutch Boys' Song, Dutch Dance by Miss Eileen Russell, Pianoforte Solo by Miss Ena Meneely, Fairies' Song, Fairy Dance by Miss Russell, Song by Girls and Boys, Sketch by elder Girls, St. Nicholas' Song (Girls), Gollywog Song (Boys), and Good-Night Chorus. The Christmas Tree was the gift of Mr. Robert M'Gimpsy, and Father Christmas, impersonated by Mr. Willie Harvey, distributed gifts. The success of the evening was largely due to Mrs. Robinson who trained the children and provided many of the costumes. To her, to the teamakers, and to the generous contributors of funds for gifts, our best thanks are due, and the hearty applause of the audience testified to their appreciation.

Killinchy.—The Christmas Concert was held on December 27th, in the presence of a packed audience. The programme was varied and interesting throughout. The Sunday School children figured effectively and contributed largely to the success of the concert. The programme began with a pianoforte solo by Miss Kelly. " Molly and the Fairy " was done in good style by the Misses M'Briar. Miss Sarah Morrow's

recitations were much admired. Her clear intonation and appropriate actions were very striking. Another children's piece was "Peter Pantomime," in which the Misses Osborne, Morrow, M'Briar and Masters G. Williams and Willie M'Cafferty took part. The young people acted a sketch entitled "Ferrell's Fix." This was the piece of the evening and afforded much amusement, the characters being, Misses Orr, Finlay, Hay, and Messrs. J. H. Fitchie and J. A. Williams. Miss M'Clurg, of Killyleagh, deserved the applause which followed each of her recitations, and Mr. M'Cardell's comic songs were received with the same gusto as they were given. Messrs. C. Larmour and J. A. Williams gave three duets rendered in good style, and the latter sang "The Company's Sergeant Major" spirited fashion. Much credit is due to the teachers and others who trained the children so well. Mrs. Williams played the accompaniments on the piano. Considering the crowded condition of the Lecture Hall good attention was given to the programme. The singing of "God save the King" brought a very happy meeting to a close.

DEATHS.

M'CULLOUGH—On December 19th, 1920, at Ballyhemlin, Co. Down, James M'Cullough, aged 16 years.

MORELAND—On December 19th, 1920, at Ballyhalbert, Co. Down, Joseph Moreland, late of Rawtenstall, Lancashire, aged 73 years.

LEDLIE—On January 7th, 1921, James Ledlie, Ballyhalbert, aged 80 years.

O'NEIL—On January 19th, 1921, at Portavogie, Co. Down, Bella Jane, wife of John O'Neil, of Ballyhalbert, aged 31 years.

O'NEIL—On January 20th, 1921, at Ballyhemlin, Co. Down, William O'Neil, aged 72 years.

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